

[REDACTED]
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C-SPAN

Gentlemen and Ladies,

Indeed you are my favorite TV program and I've been watching you a great deal during the past seven years.

The enormous value of C-SPAN is the neutrality and objectivity of the interviewers, the promotion of intelligent and careful discussion which you achieve. A person can really learn something watching. People need information to understand and thoughtfully choose, not between alternatives but among options.. The interviews, the exposure to the functions of Congress, the presentation of Committees and panels -- all valuable, and before TV and C-SPAN not possible to view. So we are in a new age, in which the Jeffersonian ideal of an informed electorate may mean a more successful democracy. And with a nation of competing special interests compromises which allow for the democratic interests of the whole are vitally important, perhaps more than ever before.

You have brought thoughtful programming about other governments, and about social issues, as most recently the development of our national health program. I love the 'booknotes'. A few years ago I subscribed to your newspaper but in the deluge of printed material around me I could not see much point in my continuing that and it had little to add to just watching in the first place, whatever time I had to do so..

I get the impression you are open to developmental change which might provide even greater information and education to the general public. I would like you to consider adding more in the way of dialog between people who are working on the compromises rather than the confrontations. Confrontation is entertaining for awhile but becomes stale in a hurry. I would assume you can't get rid of confrontive sloganizing, oversimplified stereotyping and ranting 'political' diatribe in your call-in programs, but what is really needed besides (or instead) is to watch and listen to discussion between people who are concerned not with fighting each other but with finding and negotiating constructive and beneficial compromise with each other. The "I'm right -- You're wrong" stuff is pretty disgusting and fans the fires of futile discord instead of building bridges.

We need detail and fine distinctions, facts or at least data, propositions for working on problems, prediction studies over time, warnings of what is coming if the paths we are on don't change. So I wish you could drift your selection of people to get those who have something to offer instead of someone to kick around.

What I am much interested in is being appealed to as an intelligent being who can make up my own mind if I am given enough data rather than stuffed with opinions. I don't want commentators or interpreters as I am very suspicious when others tell me what the truth is or what should be done, as if I can't figure that out for myself.

I realize you expose yourself to whoever wants to phone you in your call-in programs. I have thought about this. I have never tried to call. I think one reason a person calls you is that they are angry. Another reason, you get those who like to talk, who have inflated egos. Some are paranoid. Some are aroused by the 'stupidity' of either your presenters or their phone-in questioners and in turn have become angry or want to defend their own particular special interest. You do get a spectrum, but it is only a spectrum of those who pick up phones and sometimes do so over very long periods of time. In a country of over 250 million people your sample is interesting but slanted to include mainly those who have a special interest to defend.

Surely we need to know how many of these interests there are and their size (But the slanting tendency thwarts this being a scientifically representative sample of the public). Reports from special interests should be a beginning, not the finish of the chance you have to be truly helpful in making an informed and intelligent public which can solve problems as well as have 'bumper sticker' mentalities. We need help: not in the courtroom of lawyers who are so adversarial and care about nothing but winning, such as predominate in our political arenas, but in the art of the architectural engineers who invent and build what people need, or the art of the businessmen who work for the welfare of the whole community

I am writing this down for you; as my wife keeps saying: a letter can be read several times, but a phone call is gone once you have listened. I hope you continue to grow and be good for the country.

Respectfully yours,

